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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 050798

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TAGS: [OVIP](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EAID](#)

SUBJECT: Secretary Rice's April 23, 2008 meeting with  
Somalia President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed

[1](#)1. (U) Classified by AF A/S Jendayi E. Frazer, Reason 1.4  
(d).

[1](#)2. (U) April 23, 2008; 11 a.m.; Washington, DC.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Participants:

U.S.  
The Secretary  
Deputy Secretary John D. Negroponte  
A/S Sean McCormack, PA  
PDAS Linda Thomas-Greenfield, AF  
Special Envoy for Somalia John Yates  
Nole Garey (Notetaker)

Somalia  
President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed  
Foreign Minister Ali Ahmed Jama  
Permanent Representative to the UN Elmi Ahmed Duale  
Permanent Secretary Mohamed Abdirizak (Translator)

[1](#)4. (C) SUMMARY. During a 40-minute meeting with  
Secretary Rice, Transitional Federal Government (TFG)  
President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed outlined his program for  
achieving lasting peace and stability in Somalia and  
highlighted his commitment to move forward with dialogue  
with the opposition, scheduled to begin in Djibouti on May  
[1](#)10. Yusuf requested U.S. assistance in building the  
capacity of the TFG, restoring Somalia's membership in the  
World Bank, facilitating deployment of a United Nations  
(UN) peacekeeping operation in Somalia, lifting the UN  
arms embargo on Somalia, and countering piracy in Somali  
territorial waters. Yusuf also asked the Secretary to  
reach out to key Arab partners, specifically Saudi Arabia,  
the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait, and encourage them  
to provide financial support for the TFG and the African  
Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Secretary Rice  
reaffirmed U.S. support for deployment of a UN PKO in  
Somalia under Chapter VII of the UN Charter and agreed to  
examine options for building the capacity of the TFG and  
its institutions. END SUMMARY.

TFG Plan of Action - Dialogue and Security  
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[1](#)5. (C) Yusuf opened the conversation by outlining the  
TFG's program for achieving lasting peace and stability in  
Somalia, including efforts to engage in political dialogue  
"on the one hand" and a focus on improving security,  
including protection of civilians, on the other. Noting  
that Somalia was emerging from more than seventeen years  
of civil war, Yusuf emphasized that the two processes are  
inter-linked and cannot be separated. Following the  
establishment of the TFG three and a half years ago, Yusuf  
characterized the current conflict in Somalia as an  
"ideological war" rather than a clan conflict, specifying  
the combatants as al-Qaida and its allies in Somalia, such  
as al-Shabaab. Yusuf characterized the terrorist and  
extremist elements in Somalia as "weakened" but still able

to cause problems for the TFG and undermine broader efforts to move forward on a political process.

¶6. (C) On the issue of dialogue, Yusuf said the TFG had previously undergone a "civilian" dialogue process through the National Reconciliation Congress held in Mogadishu in ¶2007. Yusuf confirmed that the TFG is now getting ready to enter into dialogue with the armed opposition, with talks beginning in Djibouti next month and hopefully concluding in Saudi Arabia. Yusuf emphasized his government's willingness to "talk to all and not refuse anyone," although he noted that some within these groups are opposed to peace and will refuse to engage in discussions with the TFG. Yusuf said the TFG is making this offer of dialogue to all opposition groups in the interest of establishing peace, which will allow the extremists to self-select out of the process.

¶7. (C) In addition to the dialogue process, Yusuf outlined other important elements of the TFG's strategy, including reestablishment of effective security forces, building the governance capacity of TFG institutions, and continuing the transitional process towards national elections in ¶2009. Yusuf also noted the humanitarian situation and the current drought that is affecting much of Somalia. Yusuf acknowledged that "some accuse the TFG of violating human rights," but questioned the accuracy of those allegations,

STATE 00050798 002 OF 002

saying "this is our people and we will protect their rights." On the transitional political process, Yusuf outlined the remaining tasks, including drafting of a new constitution, establishment of federal regions and a system of federal governance under the TFG, conducting a census and referendum on the new constitution, as well as the national elections currently scheduled for December ¶2009. Yusuf told the Secretary that the TFG planned to present a draft of the constitution to the TFG Parliament for debate in July 2008.

YUSUF - SEEKING U.S. SUPPORT

¶8. (C) Seeking assistance in this "tall order," Yusuf appealed to the Secretary for support in building the capacity of the TFG, particularly in the area of human resources and technical advice and assistance, restoring Somalia's membership in the World Bank, facilitating deployment of a UN peacekeeping operation in Somalia, as well as lifting the UN arms embargo on Somalia and on counter-piracy efforts. Yusuf said he planned to visit London and Paris after leaving Washington to reiterate these requests with other members of the UN Security Council. Yusuf also asked the Secretary to weigh in with key Arab partners, specifically Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait, to provide financial support for the TFG and AMISOM. Yusuf complained about Qatar's negative role in Somalia, although the Secretary cautioned Yusuf not to "give up" on Qatar. Yusuf conveyed his belief that the United States is trying to help in Somalia, but stressed the need for greater U.S. support in the areas of security and capacity-building.

¶9. (C) The Secretary responded by reaffirming the U.S. desire to achieve lasting peace and stability in Somalia after many years of civil conflict, as well as her own personal belief that there continued to be an opportunity to achieve this objective in Somalia. The Secretary also noted Yusuf's influential role in setting Somalia in the right direction and establishing the foundation for a successful political process. The Secretary commented that the program outlined by Yusuf for achieving this objective was "the right one" and reflected our own strategic policy goals in Somalia.

¶10. (C) The Secretary told Yusuf that he was right to open

the possibility of dialogue to all those who want peace in Somalia, but cautioned Yusuf that the United States strongly believes that terrorists should not be brought into this process. Yusuf agreed, noting that these public messages were part of the TFG's tactics and his personal belief that known terrorists and extremists would never agree to participate in a peaceful process. The Secretary conveyed her happiness that the TFG had agreed to participate in the talks with the opposition in Djibouti, and emphasized that progress on political dialogue would reinforce our efforts in the Security Council to encourage deployment of a UN peacekeeping operation in Somalia.

¶11. (C) In response to Yusuf's requests for U.S. support, the Secretary agreed that a focus on security was appropriate, particularly the issue of deployment of a UN peacekeeping operation in Somalia and the need to train Somali security forces, and confirmed that deployment of a UN peacekeeping operation in Somalia remains a high priority for the United States. The Secretary noted that deployment of a UN peacekeeping force would allow Ethiopia to withdraw from Somalia and that removal of the lightning rod of the Ethiopian presence would allow the political process to move forward more successfully. The Secretary urged Yusuf to raise the issue of UN deployment during his meetings in London later in the week. The Secretary also noted our efforts to work with the United Kingdom and France to co-sponsor a resolution on piracy within the Security Council.

¶12. (C) The Secretary also agreed with the need to build the capacity of the Somali state and its institutions, including restoring membership in the World Bank, and agreed to further examine Yusuf's requests for capacity-building assistance to see if there were other ways that the United States might assist in this regard. Finally, the Secretary turned to the humanitarian situation in Somalia, emphasizing the U.S. objective of ensuring that humanitarian assistance reaches those in need and urging Yusuf to hold accountable any security or government officials who commit human rights violations.

RICE